ISDM
INDIAN SCHOOL OF
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Rethinking Impact

From Metrics to Meaning

Convening Report

9 September 2026 | Bengaluru

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Summary

Purpose of the Convening

An organisation's contribution to social change rarely fits within a single project cycle. Years of engagement in a place can strengthen institutions, change relationships and create new possibilities for people to act together. Yet impact is often assessed through the activities and outcomes of a particular grant. These assessments account for specific commitments, but may reveal less about how change came about, whose lives changed and what helped the gains endure. Most are built around indicators fixed at the start and funding cycles of one to three years, while institutional and relational change may develop over much longer periods.

Understanding this contribution requires attention to the history of a place, the experiences of its people and the conditions in which an organisation works. Government programs, local leadership, markets and other institutions influence what becomes possible. An organisation's role needs to be understood within these relationships, including where its work has made a difference and where its influence is limited.

A related challenge concerns what measurement helps organisations do. Teams invest considerable time in collecting information and reporting against indicators, but may have fewer opportunities to interpret findings or use them to improve their work. Funding requirements often determine what is measured and when, while community priorities and frontline experience have less influence over the questions being asked.

Rethinking Impact: From Metrics to Meaning brought two complementary perspectives into this inquiry. **ISDM's Rural Development Impact Framework (RDIF)**, developed through research on PRADAN's sustained engagement in rural geographies, brought organisational history, community accounts and geographic evidence into an examination of contribution over time.

The **Development Measurement (DM) Anchored Social Impact Measurement and Management (DM-SIMM)** considered how measurement can support learning and decision-making, from framing impact to using evidence in programs, strategy and resource allocation. Community ownership and the distribution of power over measurement were central to this approach.

Together, these perspectives connected long-term inquiry with decisions made while work is under way. The convening examined whose definitions of success count, how organisations recognise changes beyond agreed indicators and what funders need to support if learning is to influence practice. It also explored how the frameworks could help organisations give a fuller account of their contribution and make informed decisions in different settings. The day asked how the frameworks could help organisations give a fuller account of their contribution and make better decisions in different settings.

Day at a glance

03	05	35
Sessions	Speakers	Attendees

Key Takeaways

Insight 1
Project results provide only a partial account of organisational contribution. Archival records, practitioner reflections and community timelines help explain how successive interventions interact with local conditions to produce change over time.

Insight 2
Different forms of contribution require different approaches to assessment. RDIF's study across Gumla and Dhamtari highlighted different forms of contribution-building institutions and working within existing systems. The SIMM workshop showed how measurement practice can vary across programs within the same organisation.

Insight 3
People closest to change need influence over how impact is defined and interpreted. Their experiences can reveal priorities and outcomes that agreed indicators miss, but participation needs to shape decisions and account for unequal influence within communities.

Insight 4
The value of measurement depends on whether findings influence the work. Participants identified a gap between data collection and use, highlighting the importance of regular interpretation, manageable indicator sets and follow-through on findings.

Insight 5
Stronger measurement practice requires time, funding, capacity and access to shared knowledge. Grants of one to three years may be poorly matched to contributions that develop over longer periods, and shared data and practical resources could spare organisations from rebuilding methods for every project.

These insights point less to a missing indicator or tool than to how organisations and funders define the purpose of measurement, share authority over it and support its use. Both frameworks offer ways to examine these choices, while their application raises further questions about transferability, organisational capacity and the limits of sustained engagement. Experience from organisations using them will be essential to their further development.

The Challenge

The Questions We Set Out to Explore

- What does an organisation's sustained presence in a place contribute, and what are the limits of conventional, attribution-based evaluations in capturing that contribution?
- Beyond the funded project, what can an organisation's history, documentation and institutional memory reveal that a standard endline evaluation may miss?
- How can measurement respond to differences in organisational age, capacity and ways of engaging communities, while enabling people closest to change to shape its priorities and use?
- Whose definitions of impact currently dominate, and what changes when people closest to change help decide what is measured and how it is used?
- Where does a place-based, organisation-level framework reach its limits, and what evidence helps organisations recognise those limits and decide how to respond?

Who Was in the Room

The convening brought together practitioners, funders, researchers, evaluators and social purpose organisation leaders, along with intermediaries and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) professionals. Their experience ranged from sustained work with rural communities to funding development programs and assessing change.

Bringing these perspectives together helped connect questions about evidence and evaluation with the practical realities of funding, implementation and organisational learning.

What We Learned

Key Insight 1

Organisational history helps explain contribution beyond individual projects

RDIF began with PRADAN's wish to understand its contribution across decades. Researchers reconstructed its evolving theory of change through archives, practitioner accounts and community timelines, examining these alongside household surveys and geographic information system (GIS) evidence.

In Gumla, the research traced connections between agricultural improvements, migration choices and collective activity. These pathways depended on water access, local leadership and sustained engagement. Satellite data showed higher agricultural productivity in villages where PRADAN worked, though not all of it could be attributed to PRADAN, as government schemes also contributed.

The findings showed why contribution needs to be examined across interventions and alongside other actors. Co-Impact's representative similarly cautioned that sole-attribution expectations can narrow ambition to what an organisation can claim, rather than what the wider system needs.

Key Insight 2

Assessment needs to recognise different contexts and forms of contribution

RDIF highlighted institution building in Gumla and navigation within existing systems in Dhamtari. The researcher acknowledged that common survey indicators were less suited to capturing the latter.

The SIMM workshop also revealed differences in measurement maturity between individual programs and organisation-wide practice. Participants valued the rubric but sought clearer guidance on progression, qualitative evidence, process monitoring and systems change.

Both discussions challenged a single assessment template. Further testing needs to examine RDIF's relevance to younger organisations and those working indirectly with communities. A related question is how to distinguish weaknesses in program design from ecological, market or political constraints that an organisation cannot address alone.

Key Insight 3

Community perspectives need to shape priorities, interpretation and decisions

DM-SIMM addresses funder influence through shared authority over measurement, learning-oriented design and prospective measurement for community-owned impact. Communities and frontline teams have roles in defining priorities, interpreting findings and shaping responses.

During the fireside discussion, an SVYM school inside the Bandipur forest reserve provided an example of why community priorities matter. Parents had expressed a preference for English-medium teaching. After an English-medium section was introduced alongside Kannada-medium teaching, approximately 85% of new enrolments were in the English-medium section.

This example showed why community priorities need to inform program decisions, rather than be assumed at the outset. Participation needs to influence decisions while recognising unequal power within communities, including whose views are heard and how dissent is addressed.

Key Insight 4

Measurement becomes useful when findings influence ongoing work

In the SIMM workshop, 18 of 19 Mentimeter respondents reported collecting some data that was not used to make a decision. Participants examined the connection between framing impact, designing measurement, embedding it in practice, interpreting findings and acting on them.

A facilitator described reducing indicator lists to priorities linked to intended use. A practitioner's regular "so what?" and "now what?" reviews had informed changes in program duration and format.

Co-Impact's learning, monitoring and evaluation approach similarly placed learning first. Its representative argued that data collection should have a clear connection to decisions. These examples showed that measurement needs to connect with program management, giving teams opportunities to interpret evidence and respond while work continues.

Key Insight 5

Learning requires support within organisations and across the ecosystem

Limited capacity and resources, uncertainty about whether to assess a program or the organisation, and pressures of organisational survival constrain measurement. Short grants can also be poorly matched to long-term contributions. Co-Impact's commitments of at least five years, beginning with a design phase, illustrated support for inquiry and continuity.

SIMM participants sought achievable improvements that accounted for short programs, geographic spread and demands on program teams.

The fireside discussion also highlighted the need for shared data and practical knowledge. A wrongly sized livelihood production unit illustrated why organisations need access to specialist operational knowledge. Stronger practice requires investment within organisations, alongside cooperation that makes learning and specialist support available across the ecosystem.

The Shifts/ Takeaways

The two frameworks pointed to connected shifts in how organisations understand contribution, involve communities and use evidence.

Shift	Current state	Desired state	Why it matters
From reporting to learning and decision-making	Evidence is collected primarily for reporting, with limited opportunities to interpret findings or use them in ongoing work.	Regular review connects evidence with program design, implementation, strategy and resource decisions.	Methods rebuilt for every project cost time most organisations do not have, and the learning stays with whoever did the work.
From attribution to contribution over time	Assessment attributes results to individual projects and interventions, giving a fragmented account of sustained work, although change involves several actors and conditions.	Assessment explains the organisation's contribution over time, alongside community action, government programs and other influences, including whether gains endure through shocks.	The slower, more significant work happens at the level of the organisation, and attribution rewards what an organisation can claim over what the system needs.
From standard assessment to context-sensitive inquiry	Common indicators and organisation-wide assessments can overlook different forms of contribution	Measurement responds to local conditions, organisational maturity and	A method built around one organisation or place can easily miss the next, so

	and variation across programs.	purpose, with guidance on achievable improvements.	measurement has to start from where an organisation actually is.
From externally defined success to shared stewardship of impact	Funders and organisational leaders largely determine priorities and indicators, with limited influence from communities and frontline teams.	People closest to change help define priorities, interpret findings and shape responses, with attention to unequal power and dissent.	Indicators set without the people living the change tend to capture what evaluators can see rather than what communities experience.
From isolated effort to shared support for learning	Organisations rebuild methods with limited access to existing knowledge or specialist support.	Shared resources and sustained funding strengthen learning and practice.	Rebuilding methods takes scarce time, while learning remains with individuals.

Actions Ahead

The discussions suggested the following opportunities for further application, validation and learning.

For practitioners and implementing organisations

- Engage with RDIF's validation phase; organisations interested in going further are invited to get in touch.
- Examine whether reported gains endure through shocks or reflect changes in underlying conditions.
- Use the SIMM rubric across teams and programs as a tool for reflection and learning, not only assessment, to identify manageable improvements and connect evidence with decisions.

For funders

- Review whether funding periods, reporting requirements and attribution expectations fit the change being pursued and partners' capacity.
- Agree measurement priorities with organisations and communities, and make room for findings beyond standard indicators. When partners describe such changes, explore what they reveal about the program's contribution.
- Support time for learning and adaptation, alongside shared data and practical resources.

For researchers and academic partners

- Test RDIF beyond PRADAN's context, including younger organisations and those working indirectly with communities.
- Investigate where structural conditions limit contribution and how these differ from weaknesses in program design.
- Develop SIMM examples and guidance on next steps after self-assessment, accounting for program differences, qualitative evidence and systems change.

Open questions for continued exploration

- How can both frameworks respond to differences in organisational age, capacity and ways of working with communities?
- How can assessment of long-term contribution and ongoing learning inform strategy and program design?
- How can communities shape measurement and decisions while representing differences and dissent within them?
- What practical guidance would help organisations apply the frameworks and act on their findings?
- How can funders support learning and adaptation while meeting accountability requirements?

Applying both frameworks in different settings will help examine these questions. Organisations' experience can inform further development, showing where the approaches support decisions and where adaptation is needed.

Appendix

Detailed Agenda

Time	Track 1 - DM-Anchored SIMM	Track 2 - RDIF
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	**Registration, Tea and Exhibition Gallery Walk**	
9:30 AM - 9:45 AM	**Joint Launch - Framing and Agenda Setting** Opening from ISDM, PRADAN and 4th Wheel Social Impact. The two frameworks are positioned in relation to each other: SIMM as a lens on how measurement is governed and used to inform decisions, and RDIF as a lens on how change is understood in a place over time. Participants confirm their track and break into the rooms. This is the only shared session until lunch.	
9:50 AM - 10:30 AM	**Fire side chat/Panel discussion/ Fishbowl** A moderated discussion on Reimagining Social Impact: Shifting the Development Ecosystem from Reporting Compliance to Systemic Transformation	
10:30 AM - 11:00 AM	**Framework Presentation** 1. **The DM-Anchored SIMM Framework** Presents the five-stage lifecycle and the logic connecting the three principles to a practice model. Framing Impact → Designing Architecture → Embedding in Practice → Interpreting Evidence → Using Evidence for Decisions, as the general logic of measurement as a learning system. Closes by handing participants the SIMM Adoption Rubric and its four-level maturity scale for use next. 2. **What RDIF Is and How It Works** Presents the framework's methodology, evidence base, and the Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) logic - how an intervention's setting shapes why and how it produces change. Closes by introducing the scenario used next.	
11:00 AM - 11:15 AM	***Break***	

11:15 AM - 1:30 PM	**Track 1- SIMM** Hands-On Activity - SIMM Adoption Rubric followed by Synthesis and Next Steps	**Track 2- RDIF** RDIF presentation, Audience Q&A followed by Hands-On Activity and Synthesis and Next Steps
1:30 PM - 2:30 PM	**Lunch and Networking**	
2:30 PM - 4:30 PM	Workshop continues (optional participation)	

List of Attendees

Full Name	Organisation Name
Govindan Soundararajan	Dhwani Foundation
Tony Dsouza	10x Impact Labs
Naima Salahuddeen	The Association of People with Disability (APD)
Fathima Raniya	The Association of People with Disability (APD)
Sreerama Rajesh	The Association of People with Disability (APD)
Dr. Saravanan Manickam	The Association of People with Disability (APD)
Archit Majumdar	The Association of People with Disability (APD)
Shraddha Gargatti	Independent Professional
Ashwi Ansh	Sunbird Trust
Kaye Lushington	Pacta
Rajika Seth	SCALE
Sowmya Jain	SCALE
Bhargavi N Prakash	Children of India Foundation
Neena Jain	Independent Professional
Madhuri Dhurjati	Reweave
Vijaya Balaji	Social lens Consulting
Aditya Tambi	Independent Professional
Akshay Roongta	Dots (Ooloi Labs)
Aravind Subramaniam	V Impact Consulting
Yashwin Iddya	Fields of View
Ghanshyam Kumar	Quest Alliance
Romina Joseph	Quest Alliance
Simran Kapoor	Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship
Lakshmikantha N R	WELL Labs
Tejas Pahlajani	Equist Consulting
Annette Francis Parakkal	Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship (GAME)
Priyambada Talapatra	AuxoHub
Nita Aggarwal	Co-Impact
Vijay K Paul	Prakalpa Saujanaya
Smita	Nudge
Shristi Singhania	Upaya
Anirban	Grassroots Research and Advocacy Movement (GRAAM)
Ramesh Venkatraman	Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM)

Sameer Shisodia	Rainmatter Foundation
Bikalp Chamola	Azim Premji University
Payal Mulchandani	The 4th Wheel Social Impact

Links to reports

📘 A methodological framework for assessing the long-term impact of a nonprofit's work in a geography

📘 Roots of change: A realist framework for long-term rural development impact

📘 Roots of change: A handbook for mapping systemic change in rural development

📘 Principles for Reimagining Social Impact Measurement and Management (SIMM) practices

📘 DM-SIMM: A funder's guide to reflect, learn, and act on social impact

📘 DM-SIMM: An Implementation Organisation's Guide to Reflect, Learn, and Act on Social Impact

Event Presentations

Presentation 1



The Problem

Most impact evaluation asks whether a specific project produced a specific outcome, within a project period.

That usually doesn't work for organisations like PRADAN, which don't just run projects in a place but stay for decades. The intervention isn't one activity, it's a long, changing relationship with a place and the effects build up slowly and unevenly.

The usual question

"Did this project produce this outcome, in this period?"

The question we needed

What worked, for whom, in what context, through which mechanisms and why?

What We Found

Gumla: impact as creation

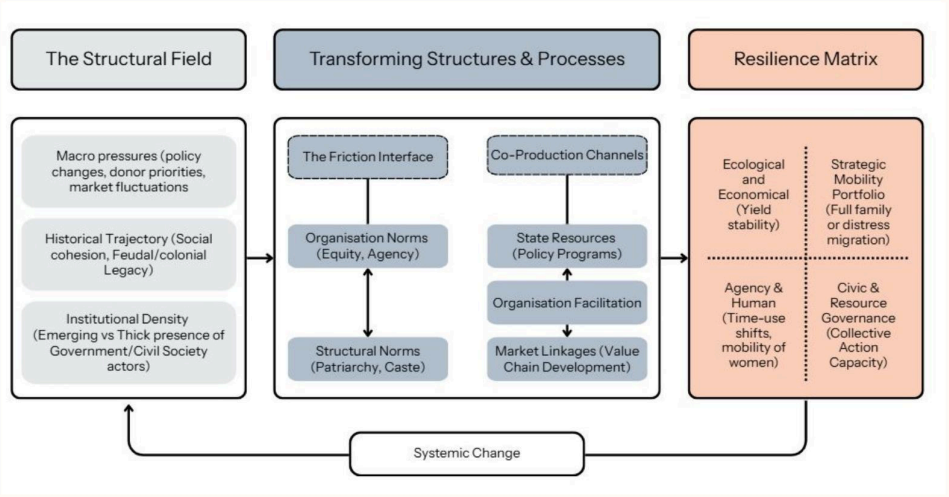
New institutions, new infrastructure — gains you can trace directly.

Dhamtari: impact as navigation

Not new structures, but shifts in who gets included and whose voice counts within structures that already existed.

Both are real impact. Most evaluation methods are only built to see the first kind.

The Framework: RDIF



Why This Matters Beyond PRADAN

The framework was built and tested on one organisation. Its real value is in what it makes possible more broadly. We see three things this can do for the sector:

1. Impact as contribution, not attribution
2. Geography and time, not just projects
3. A tool for internal reflection

Presentation 2



The Evaluation Trap

The way we evaluate doesn't match the way we work

What evaluations typically ask ?

- Did this intervention produce these outcomes?
- Over year long project cycle(s)?
- What fraction of the change can be attributed to us?

What long-term rural development actually looks like?

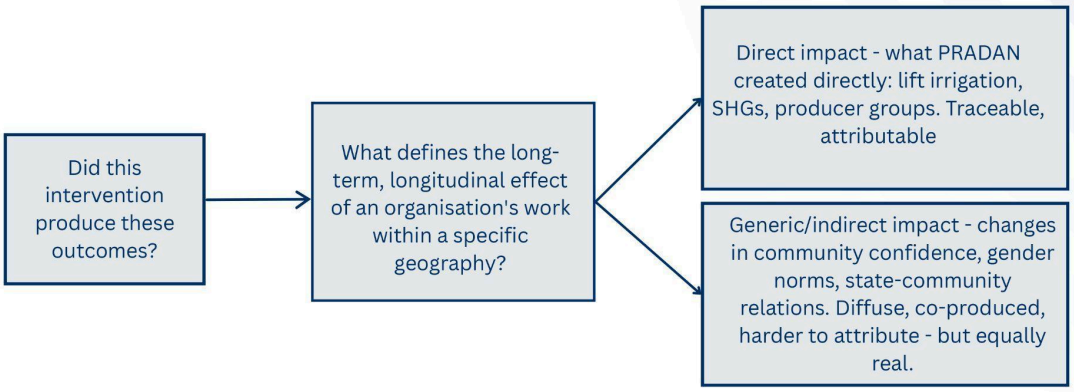
- Multiple overlapping interventions
- Decades of presence
- Change that is slow, non-linear, and co-produced with communities, the state, and markets

"Social change processes are cumulative, non-linear, and path-dependent. Shifts in norms, relationships, and institutional capacity develop incrementally through repeated engagement rather than from singular projects." Mayne (2020)

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Pradan

Shifting the question



Attribution asks: how much?
Contribution asks: were we a necessary part of why this happened?

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Two places, one puzzle

	Gumla (Jharkhand)	Dhamtari (Chhattisgarh)
PRADAN's entry	Mid-1990s — 25+ years	2005 — 20 years
What PRADAN found	Emerging institutions. Limited government interventions, thin markets, rainfed subsistence agriculture	Institutional thicket. DAY-NRLM active, MGNREGA running, SHGs already existing
Agriculture	Rainfed kharif, high seasonal distress migration	Irrigated Paddy + forest economy; better irrigation
PRADAN's role	Creator and mobiliser	Facilitator and convergence broker

Same organisation, same values, same broad approach - but radically different structural conditions. The comparison is the analytical engine of this study.

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Pradan

The IPT to CMO pipeline

INITIAL PROGRAMME THEORY (IPT)

The educated guess before fieldwork.
Built from PRADAN's own documents, practitioner interviews, and existing theory.
Answers: what should be happening, according to whom, based on what logic?

FIELDWORK REFINEMENT

47 FGDs and 37 interviews test the IPT against lived experience.

Where the theory holds, it becomes a CMO. Where it breaks, context reveals why.

CONTEXT–MECHANISM–OUTCOME (CMO) CONFIGURATIONS

Testable, conditional causal claims.
"In villages WITH enough water and community leadership (context), PRADAN's agricultural training mobilises investment in farming (mechanism), leading to surplus, reduced migration, and functioning SHGs (outcome)."

The if-then-because logic that drives the entire analysis.

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How we built the IPT for PRADAN

42 INTROSCAPE ARTICLES PRADAN's own practitioner magazine across two decades. First-person accounts of what professionals observed. Source of the "before" and the mechanism language.	**20 ANNUAL REPORTS** Traced how PRADAN's theory of change shifted from phase to phase. The locus of agency, the balance between livelihoods and governance, the shift toward systems thinking.
6 PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEWS + 1 FGD Institutional memory. Recovered the reasoning behind strategic pivots that documentation alone couldn't explain.	**ABDUCTIVE + RETRODUCTIVE REASONING** Not deduction (applying a theory) or induction (summarising patterns). Abduction: what's the best explanation for what we see? Retroduction: what structures must exist to make this outcome possible?

No baseline. Evolving strategy. 30 years of activity. This is how we reconstructed the causal logic.

The IPT is not a description of what PRADAN did. It is a theory of how what they did was supposed to work — and why.

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Mixed methods design

Qualitative Data
47 FGDs + 37 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS
Builds and refines the CMO configurations. Generates the causal language from the community's own voice.

Cross-Sectional household survey
2,010 HOUSEHOLDS, 201 VILLAGES, GUMLA + DHAMTARI
Tests whether patterns from qualitative analysis hold at scale. Measures income, migration, women's empowerment.

Village-level survey:
201 VILLAGES
What does a PRADAN village look like vs. a non-PRADAN village? Lift irrigation, producer groups, trust, caste inclusion.

Geo-spatial panel
800 FARM PLOTS, NDVI SATELLITE IMAGERY, 2017–2024
38,000+ plot-month observations. Vegetation index as a proxy for agricultural productivity — measured independently of self-report.

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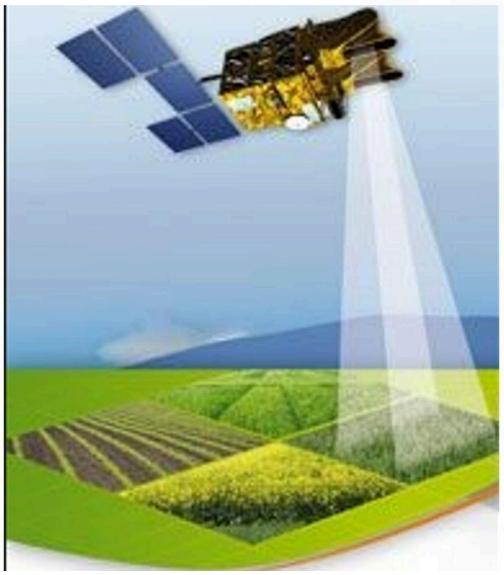
How to merge on ground survey data with satellite data



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NDVI as proxy for productivity



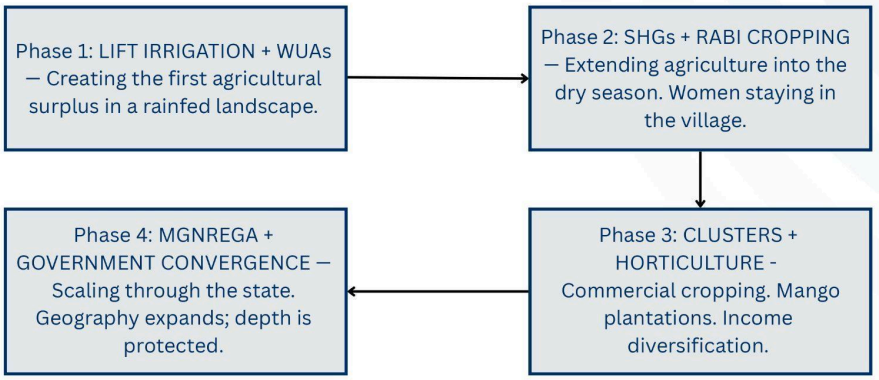
Sampling strategy and village classification

PRADAN works in **intensive villages** (deep, multi-year engagement), **non-intensive villages** (lighter presence), and has never worked in some villages.
But these are not randomly distributed. PRADAN tends to enter the most marginalised, least accessible, most agriculturally challenged places

AGRICULTURAL SUITABILITY INDEX for 2005
We constructed an independent measure of a village's agricultural potential from 8 satellite and climate datasets (soil moisture, rainfall variability, elevation, land cover). This let us separate "PRADAN villages are poorer because they were targeted" from "PRADAN villages show lower outcomes because the intervention didn't work."

12 STRATA × 2 DISTRICTS
Three PRADAN categories × four agricultural suitability quartiles. 201 villages sampled proportionally. 10 HHs for each village, 2 from each direction.

Gumla: building from scratch in a void



Creation and mobilisation. Impact here is visible in the landscape, traceable to PRADAN, and measurable 25 years on.

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Dhamtari: navigating a thicket

WHAT ALREADY EXISTED WHEN PRADAN ARRIVED

DAY-NRLM running. MGNREGA active. Many SHGs already formed under DRPP and State Mission. Irrigation infrastructure present. Some villages with histories of organised land rights struggle. State visible in roads, pensions, and ration cards.

WHAT PRADAN ADDED

Depth to existing SHGs — from savings collectives to institutions capable of collective action. Convergence brokerage — getting multiple government schemes to arrive at the same household. Confidence to engage the administration directly. Quality of governance in producer groups and federations.

PRADAN's role here was not to build infrastructure — it was to ensure that existing infrastructure reached the most marginalised.

Impact here does not live in new structures. It lives in changed processes — who gets a scheme, how a woman speaks in a gram sabha, whether the poorest household is included or excluded from a producer group.

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The CMO configurations

Four causal configurations emerged from 47 FGDs and 37 interviews. Each is a testable if-then-because claim.

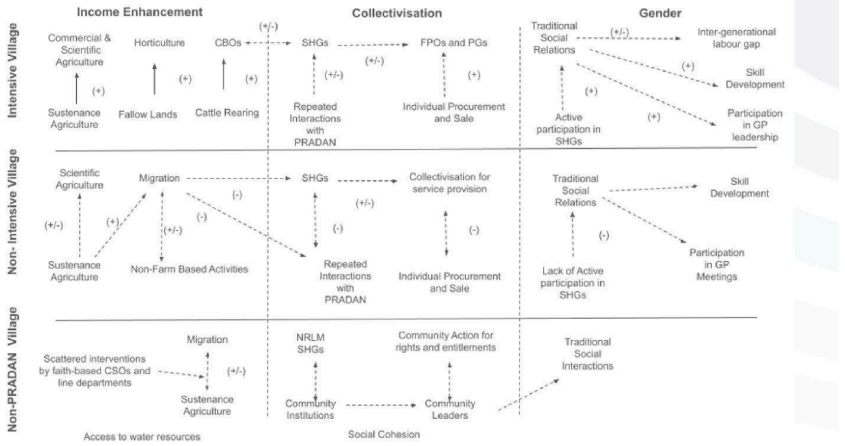
	IF	THEN	BECAUSE
1a	Village has water access + households trapped in distress migration	Agricultural surplus created; migration falls; income rises	Farming becomes worth staying for. The city stops being the only option.
1b	CMO 1a worked — migration fell + PRADAN visits frequently	SHGs function; loans go into seeds, not emergencies	Women are present. When women stay, the group exists. When harvest repays loans, the cycle sustains.
1c	SHGs functioning + women have built collective confidence	Women enter gram sabhas, panchayats, federation roles	The SHG is the rehearsal space. The gram sabha is the stage. Training gives women a language for the state.
2	Upland/midland terrain, no surface water + strong local leadership	Fallow land converted — wells dug, hapas built, plantations established	Water harvesting requires cooperation before it yields anything. Leadership makes people show up for a long-horizon task.

Impact and contribution pathways: the full picture

The chain holds. Subsistence agriculture → commercial surplus → SHGs functioning → FPOs → women in GP leadership. Each step creates the conditions for the next.

The chain is partial. Agriculture improves but migration doesn't fall enough. SHGs form but lack sustained engagement. Women participate in panchayats but without collective backing.

NRLM SHGs exist. Community cohesion varies. But the institutional layering — the accumulation of connected interventions over time — is absent.



The figure is not a theory. It is a reconstruction of what actually happened — built from the data.

Agricultural Productivity: what satellite data tells us

GUMLA — PRADAN VILLAGES ARE GREENER

Overall NDVI: 0.8% higher in PRADAN villages. Modest overall, but meaningful when multiplied across seasons and hectares.

RABI SEASON: THE STRONGEST SIGNAL

3.6% higher NDVI in PRADAN villages in rabi. Equivalent to ~1.3–1.6 extra quintals per hectare. This is PRADAN's water-harvesting fingerprint — dry-season agriculture on terrain where water was previously unavailable.

MIDLAND PLOTS: WHERE PRADAN'S WORK SHOWS MOST CLEARLY

4.5% higher NDVI in midland areas — the most challenging agro-ecology — equivalent to ~2.7 extra quintals per hectare.

DHAMTARI — NO PRODUCTIVITY ADVANTAGE

NDVI in PRADAN Dhamtari villages is not higher. Not because PRADAN failed — but because productivity there reflects market orientation and cropping choices, not yield gains.

DURATION OF PRADAN EXPOSURE MATTERS FOR PRODUCTIVITY GAINS

The results suggest diminishing marginal returns to prolonged PRADAN engagement. While long-exposed villages remain more productive overall, additional PRADAN presence generates progressively smaller productivity gains in mature intervention areas.

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The satellite data useed to address the attribution questions. What it shows is 7 years of vegetation change on 800 farm plots.

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Income and Migration: What the Survey Shows

GUMLA — THE GAP IS CLEAR AND SIGNIFICANT	DHAMTARI — THE PATTERN REVERSES
Kharif income per acre: ₹31,000 (PRADAN) vs. ₹23,000 (non-PRADAN)	Kharif income per acre: ₹39,000 (PRADAN) vs. ₹41,000 (non-PRADAN)
Total agricultural income per acre: ₹34,000 (PRADAN) vs. ₹27,000 (non-PRADAN) — statistically significant	Total agricultural income per acre: ₹47,000 (PRADAN) vs. ₹50,000 (non-PRADAN)
Greater irrigation access and improved farming practices drive the kharif advantage. The gap is real, persistent, and aligns with what the qualitative fieldwork found.	Non-PRADAN villages start from a higher baseline. PRADAN's contribution here likely operates through diversification, risk reduction, and non-farm livelihoods — not per-acre yield gains.

Income and migration are not as tightly coupled as the theory of change assumed. Distress migration is not only an income problem — it has structural, social, and aspirational dimensions that income gains alone do not resolve. While nature of it shows difference, results are not statistically significant.

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Women's Empowerment: five dimensions

GUMLA — THE GAP IS CLEAR AND SIGNIFICANT	DHAMTARI — THE PATTERN REVERSES
In PRADAN villages women score 0.35–0.45 standard deviations above the sample mean on all five indices. Non-PRADAN women score 0.15–0.20 below it. Every gap is statistically significant at p<0.001.	Strong gains on resource access, self-efficacy, household influence, and structural decisions. But mobility — physical freedom to travel alone to markets, health centres, and places outside the village — shows no significant advantage and may even be slightly negative. Deep-seated norms around women's movement require longer, more sustained norm-focused work.
unpaid care work falls slightly; income work rises. Women are entering the economy — and their domestic burden is modestly lightening.	agency gains are real, but care burdens persist. Women make more decisions, have more voice — but still shoulder the same share of domestic work.

Empowerment is not one thing. A woman can gain voice in a gram sabha and still not be allowed to go to the market alone. The five indices show where change has reached — and where it hasn't yet.

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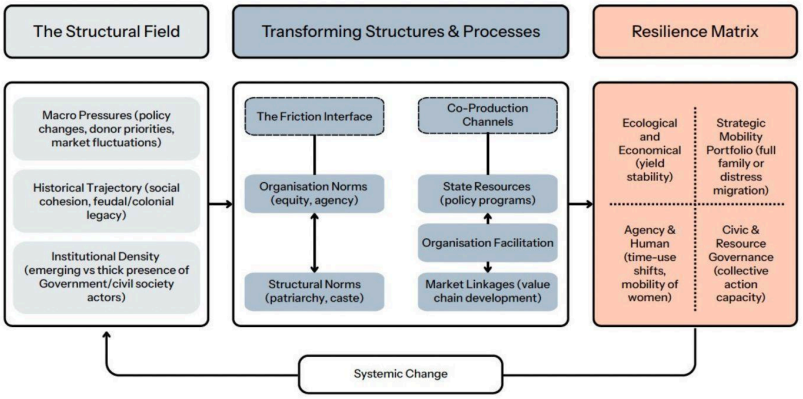
Village-level analysis: what institutions tell us

SHGs ARE EVERYWHERE — THEY ARE NOT THE DIFFERENTIATOR 98% of all surveyed villages (PRADAN and non-PRADAN) have SHGs. Government saturation has made SHG formation near-universal. What matters is not whether SHGs exist — but how they function, what they do, and what they're connected to.	**LIFT IRRIGATION IS THE CLEAREST MARKER OF PRADAN'S PRESENCE** Present in 32.3% of intensive PRADAN villages vs. 5.7% of non-PRADAN villages (p=0.006). Producer Groups exist only in intensive PRADAN villages (6.5% vs. 0%). These are capital-intensive and technically complex. Neither the state nor communities could create them alone.
THE TRUST PARADOX Generalised social trust — "do people trust each other here?" — is actually higher in non-PRADAN villages (47.7%) than in intensive PRADAN villages (24.6%). But caste-based exclusion from SHGs is lower in PRADAN villages.	**Intensive development work disrupts existing equilibria. It surfaces conflicts, contests power, and challenges who belongs where. Lower reported trust during this process may signal productive friction — not failure. The rebuilding is visible in the lower exclusion figures.**

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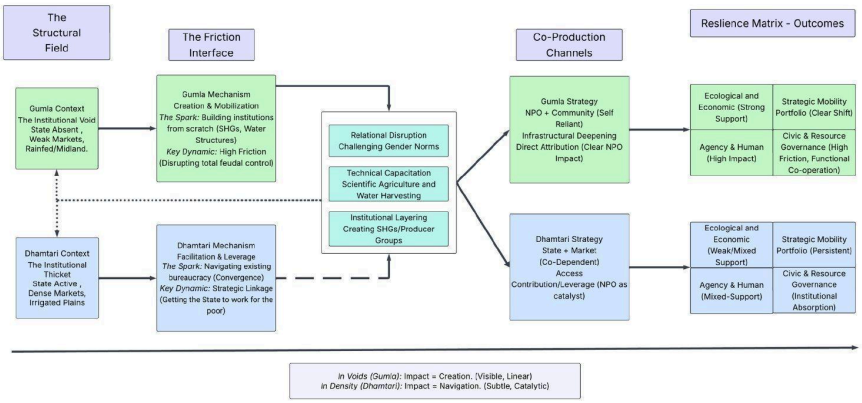
प्रदान Pradan

The Rural Development Impact Framework



The feedback arrow is the most important element: when resilience outcomes reach a threshold, they begin to alter the structural field itself. That is what systems change actually looks like.

RDIF applied: Gumla vs. Dhamtari



In voids, impact = creation. Visible, linear, attributable.
In thickets, impact = navigation. Subtle, catalytic, relational.
Both are real. Both require different evaluative tools to see.

Presentation 3

DM–SIMM · Introducing the framework

What we started with: four draft principles

Draft 1.0 was a set of propositions, not conclusions. Four principles were written up from the early evidence and taken to the sector to be argued with. The practitioner challenges in amber are what reshaped them.

01

Empower all stakeholders to align on shared impact goals

A shared, realistic understanding and language of collective impact goals — reaching communities at the last mile, not stopping at funder and grantee.

"Who decides when purposes cannot be shared?"

02

Design pathways and indicators grounded in research, yet agile

Impact pathways and Theories of Change treated as living hypotheses; KPIs as directional signals rather than proxies for truth.

"Guard against over-engineering — smaller SPOs need a minimum viable pathway."

03

Move from a delivery mindset to an engagement mindset

Implementation anchored in continuous learning, reflection and adaptation, with MEL reframed from a reporting function to a sense-making one.

"Learning without consequence becomes theatre — link it to strategy and resourcing."

04

Capture emergent impact as it is experienced at the last mile

A shift from attribution to contribution, rebalancing accountability towards communities alongside funders and regulators.

"Communities are not neutral arbiters — address dissent and elite capture."

None of these survived unchanged. What they became is on the next two slides.

How the framework emerged

Two phases of work between ISDM and 4th Wheel Social Impact — grounded in what practitioners actually do, not in first principles alone.

1

Field evidence

The Impact or Illusion study: 25 organisations and 235 respondents, 21 M&E experts, and 6 funder interviews across CSR, family and international philanthropy.

2

Literature and mapping

82 documents spanning impact assessment, evaluation methodology and development management, mapped back to the assumptions underneath them.

3

Distillation

Roughly 120 underlying principles surfaced, then consolidated into three that hold across strategy, design, implementation and use.

4

Critical validation

A Core Working Group of funders, nonprofit leaders and intermediaries stress-tested the draft. Disagreement was retained, not smoothed away.

Validation prioritised critical engagement over consensus. Points of disagreement were used to sharpen the boundaries of the framework — including the hardest question the group put back to us: are funders ready to reward honesty over success narratives?

What we asked, and what we arrived at

The principles are the finding, not the question. Here is the line between the two.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Why does SIMM practice keep falling short of its own intent — and what would move measurement closer to where impact is actually created?

Who is measurement for? | What actually gets measured? | How and why is it practised?

STARTED WITH · four draft principles, put up for challenge

01	Align stakeholders on shared impact goals	→ *Governance*
02	Research-grounded but agile pathways	→ *Design*
03	Delivery mindset to engagement mindset	→ *Practice*
04	Capture emergent impact at the last mile	→ *Design + Practice*

ARRIVED AT · three principles the evidence converged on

Governance	Who measurement serves
Design	What gets measured
Practice	How it is practised

Four became three by consolidation, not deletion: the emergent-impact proposition was split across design and practice, where it could actually be acted on.

What the framework says

The finding: one shift, held up by three interdependent principles.

Management OF development

"Did you do what you said you would do?"

Management FOR development

"What are we learning, and what needs to change?"

01 **Governance**

Governance of measurement must redistribute power

Power centres share agenda-setting authority, enable co-ownership of impact, and redesign incentives so that learning-oriented practice is institutionally protected, not merely permitted.

02 **Design**

Design for learning-oriented pathways and indications of impact

Pathways grounded in rigorous research but agile enough to absorb real-time feedback — tracking emergent impact, the early and observable signals that a programme is moving in the right direction.

03 **Practice**

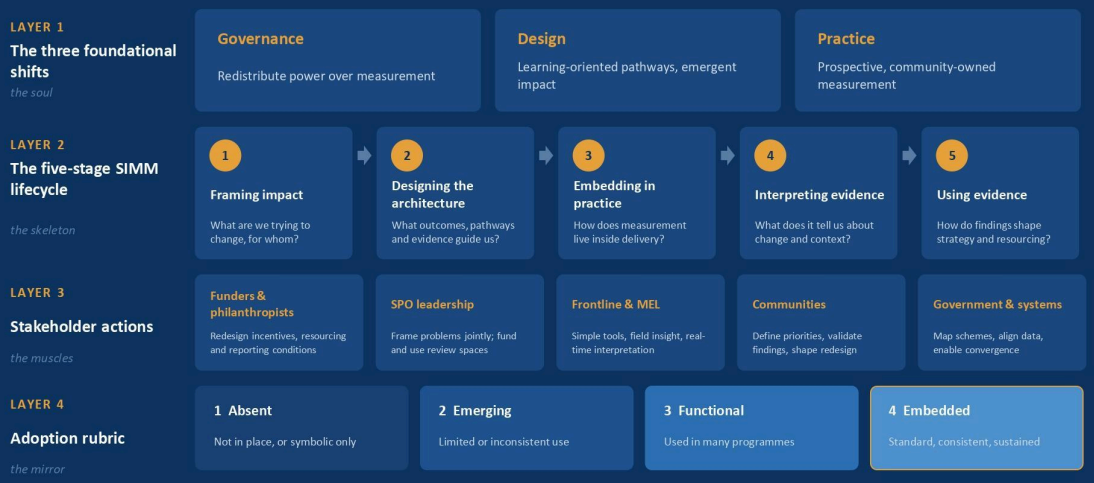
Practise prospective measurement for community-owned impact

Learning is institutionalised inside decision-making routines, so accountability is met through responsible adaptation — strengthening both upward and downward accountability.

Sequenced but non-linear: governance enables design, design shapes practice, and practice feeds back into governance.

Putting it to work: four connected layers

Each layer makes the one above it operational — from what to believe, to when, to who does what, to where you actually stand today.



Where to start: Stages 1 & 2 (framing and design) → Stage 3 (embedding in practice) → Stages 4 & 5 (interpretation and use). The rubric is a diagnostic, not a score.

Key photos












ISDM
UDAYAN CARE
Measurement starts with making sense of data
Challenge
The Approach
ISDM
DIGITAL GREEN
The Shift
The Learning that Emerged
Impact does not happen after a program is implemented. It happens with listening, learning and adapting.
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